



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Council response to the Inquiry into Participation in sport and physical activity by the Northern Ireland Assembly's Culture Arts and Leisure Committee
Date:	15 April 2010
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officers:	Caroline Wilson, Policy and Business Development Manager Elaine Black, Policy and Business Development Officer

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to inform Members that the Northern Ireland Assembly has an inquiry into participation in sport and physical activity underway through its Culture Arts and Leisure committee and seek Committee approval for the Council's response.

Relevant Background Information

The Council has an opportunity to provide a response to the Northern Ireland Assembly's inquiry into participation in sport and physical activity as the inquiry draws to a close.

The Culture Arts and Leisure Committee's inquiry will identify, analyse and consider solutions to the ongoing decline in adult participation in sport and physical activity as evidenced in the NI Continuous Household Survey.

The remit of the inquiry will specifically examine:

- The main groups within the adult population which have lower levels of participation than the average rate for adults;
- The issues particular to each of these main groups which act as a barrier to participation;
- Consider solutions particular to each of these main groups which could lead to higher levels of participation, including considering examples of best practice from other countries and regions;
- Report to the Assembly making recommendations to the Department and/or others.

Key issues

The Parks and Leisure Department have coordinated a written response and sought input from the Health and Environmental Service Department, in particular the newly established Belfast Health Development Unit, to finalise the submission.

The draft response outlines the Council's favourable position to shaping and delivering - through effective partnership working - a targeted approach to arresting the decline in participation in sport and physical activity, particularly at adulthood.

The response includes a summary picture of the key points on the patterns around physical activity and the nature of participation which shapes and influences the development of leisure in particular sports programmes and physical activities.

A full overview of the Council's existing practice (e.g. the BOOST scheme; Support for Sport; and Healthwise, etc.) and advocacy for building participation are incorporated in the response.

The individual services, resources, programmes or activities included in the report are listed below:

- The portfolio of leisure assets including leisure centres, parks, playgrounds and open space;
- activity programmes in our leisure centres and community centres;
- Support for Sport and Park event grant aid;
- BOOST membership scheme;
- GP referral scheme under the "Healthwise" initiative and Healthy Families pilot programme to target fitness and obesity levels in target groups;
- a focus on food safety and nutrition through our Environmental Health Service;
- generating economic and social development through funding and programmes of support e.g. Neighbourhood Renewal & PEACE funds to deliver healthier communities and places to live;
- the priority we have given to strategically leading the development of a positive leisure vision for the city including an active participation plan alongside the ongoing commitment to Health and Well-Being outcomes in our corporate plan;
- our ongoing work in education and participation across all our services.

The response also highlights the need for clear, agreed targets in tackling the rising levels of inactivity. The need for a meaningful comprehensive performance reporting and a clear PSA target defined and published which can be implemented at an operational level is outlined in the response. The individual and community benefits from increasing levels of activity need to be monitored simultaneously to promote the overall value to active living and healthy citizens.

In summary the Council's draft response highlights its unique position to simultaneously prevent, manage and overcome inactivity through co-ordinated and community led action. It stresses the need for partnership working to effectively provide affordable facilities and address through programmes and opportunities for activity, weight management or intervention programmes and education.

The response confirms that the Council would welcome ongoing involvement as part of the inquiry in participation in sport and physical activity, particularly as it drafts its recommendations for implementation.

Resource Implications

None.

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider the draft response and approve subject to any amendments or comments provided.

Decision Tracking

Policy and business Development Manager will submit the response following the May Council Meeting.

Abbreviations

PSA – Public Service Agreement

Documents Attached

Appendix 1: The Council's written response to the Culture Arts and Leisure Committee's Inquiry into participation in sport and physical activity.